

Howland Wood - Curatorial

Lathrop, Nancy Florence
[Research Historic Rarities
New Hope, PA]

1934

Subject: John Paul Jones medal

[c/o Mrs. W.R. Harris,
Washington, D.C.]

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Lathrop, Nancy Florence

1934

- John Paul Jones Medal Authentication

Howland Wood Correspondence

Nancy Florence Lathrop. Typewritten letter to Howland Wood, ANS Secretary, dated June 5, 1934, signed. The writer, whose letterhead identifies her as a researcher of historic rarities, is excited about authenticating a John Paul Jones medal she believes to be one that was struck from the die made for the famous naval hero in the late eighteenth century. An additional supplemental letter refers to, and apparently was accompanied by, research notes meant for Wood's "eye alone."

Howland Wood, typewritten reply to Nancy Florence Lathrop, dated June 7, 1934. Wood provides an analysis of the medal concluding that it is "an original impression" of the medal originally in Jones' possession.

(Letters described by Arnold Tescher)

care of Mrs. W.R. Harris
3136 Dumbarton Ave...Washington D.C.

NANCY FLORENCE LATHROP
RESEARCH HISTORIC RARITIES
NEW HOPE, PENNSYLVANIA

June 5th, 1934

Mr. Howland Wood
Secretary
American Society of Numismatics
Huntington Museum

Dear Mr. Wood:

A very unexpected interest has arisen here in Washington this past week, in the John Paul Jones medal and accompanying relics coming from the Ingraham family of Charleston S. C. I came to Washington to commence to work up a preliminary interest in the matter and find events moving so fast that it has become in the nature of an emergency.

Admiral Grayson was approached; and he immediately responded with his most sympathetic and enthusiastic interest, and considers that the findings at the present so far as they have gone, are of sufficient interest and importance to warrant our bringing the matter to the attention of the President. Admiral Grayson further considers that the President will be disposed to lend his very valuable support in the decisions concerning the final disposition of the medal; and may possibly consider that sufficient evidence as to the authenticity is now developed to warrant his bringing the matter to the attention of Congress before this session is closed. Or in the event that he, President Roosevelt, may consider that further identification is necessary on certain points before taking such a step; his cooperation and interest will from now on be invaluable in the interests of these relics.

I will say first that my own plan of action is that no faze of the evidence for or against the authenticity of this medal, as being the original one, should be withheld, even at this juncture.

Therefor, my purpose in writing is to ask whether you will be good enough to put in writing, as you so kindly offered to do; your impressions and deductions from the examination of the medal and the other evidence we have gone over together; that appears to authenticate, or approximately authenticate, this medal as one of the first to be struck from the die made for John Paul Jones.....or any impression that you may have gained that this may be the original medal of Paul Jones

NANCY FLORENCE LATHROP
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It has been arranged that any appointments will be postponed until the first of next week or possibly, if all goes well in preparation, the last of this week...and thus a letter mailed to me before the end of this week would reach me in time.

Admiral Grayson and others interested at the present time consider that your findings as a numismatist are perhaps of the greatest importance as the other aspects have had to be built up on a mass of merely suggestive material.

You will want to know whether there has been any report from the Paris Mint. As you know there has been a delay in getting in touch with them, but I have finally succeeded in doing so thru the State Department and the French Embassy...but, I am told, there is no way of ascertaining how long it will take them to make such an investigation. If it is simply done we may expect an answer from them any time now.

I requested that they look up, at the same time any data of a similar nature on the number of medals struck from the die of the Daniel Morgan medal...as the double evidence may strengthen the case for the Paul Jones medal now in hand.

For your convenience, I enclose some notes on the research as I plan to present it and shall be grateful for suggestions or criticisms. Some of the material has been gathered since I last consulted with you and it seemed best that I should lay this also before you as you are so kindly offering your cooperation.

I would not wish you to be in ignorance of any of the matter before you give your opinion, as I am not too greatly experienced and feel the grave responsibility upon me in this unexpected turn of affairs.

I cannot very well express my full appreciation and gratitude for the encouragement and advice you have given me since the time I first consulted with you on this matter and know that your wisdom will make the report as to your impression or findings, right for the matter as it now stands.

Very sincerely yours

Nancy F. Lathrop

Admiral Grayson understands fully that the report from Paris is considered by yourself and others of expert opinion, as being of such importance, that it will be necessary before a really final opinion is passed.

NANCY FLORENCE LATHROP
RESEARCH HISTORIC RARITIES
NEW HOPE, PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. Howland Wood...

and presented with apologies -

Dear Mr. Wood:

The enclosed notes on research are meant for your eye alone ... It had occurred to me that as I am unable to consult with you in person again before presenting the matter...and because of the emergency here...and because your opinion as expert numismatist will be considered of ~~some~~ much importance ..I should not be surprised if you are consulted by those at present interested in the matter after I present the matter to them....that I should place in your hands the bulk of the evidence I have collected together for my case ..particularly any developments that have occurred since I last talked with you... Owing to pressure for time .. these notes, as you will readily see are very hastily written and I have not attempted to revise or correct them....I do not suggest that you attempt to read them word for word...as much of it is already familiar to you... but I have attempted to place the the items under such separate headings that you will be able to pick out those that you may wish to reconsider or any new items of interest.... and will give you some idea of ~~the~~ my own plan of approach in presenting the research and evidence. My formal manuscript will consist of chronologically placed quotations from manuscripts..records..letters ..and from authentic histories...with an index and a summary . Sources of information etc etc.. Information concerning the medal from Charleston and a complete record of the Ingraham family with the family tree....and records of them found in the Naval Library... Names of those rendering assistance on any aspect will be given...so that they may be referred to again if necessary... The only definite statements concerning the research done will be from yourself and from Dr. Hugo Paullin of the Carnegie Foundation ... who has given me a letter commending the manner in which the research has been handled by me and saying as he is not an expert on medals " he cannot offer anything in the way of authentication of the medal...but that he considers the research done worthy of being presented to the most competent judges" Dr. Martin of the Manus. division of Cong Library has offered to examine my manuscript of research for me for correction before I present it. My intention is..that the matter be presented in its entirety to the President..all considerations both pro and con... subject to his future interest in it or any present desires... and that it will be understood that

the search for any information to clear up certain obscurities...will continue.

I will not press you in the matter of getting your answer back to me as I realize the importance of your handling the matter as you think best... relative to your time ..or whether you will want to communicate with me further before taking the step of writing your letter concerned with the evidence for the medal.

Miss O Reilly still remains my ally in the matter and is giving me assistance in many ways at the present time. She tells me "that I have The Jones medal"!

Thanking you again for your invaluable assistance to me ~~in the matter~~

Sincerely

N. F. Lathrop

June 7, 1934.

Miss Nancy F. Lathrop
Care of Mrs. W. R. Harris
3136 Dumbarton Avenue
Washington, D. C.

Dear Miss Lathrop:

I did not get away this week as I expected but I am leaving tonight and will be gone a week. Therefore I am hastening to write you the letter and return your evidence. I will be back in a week's time and if you want me to take up anything further or cover any other points let me know.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator

June 7, 1934.

Miss Nancy F. Lathrop
Care of Mrs. W. R. Harris
3136 Dumbarton Avenue
Washington, D. C.

Dear Miss Lathrop:

Regarding the John Paul Jones medal which you showed me sometime ago, all I can state is as follows:

I have never seen or heard of a specimen in gold. I have seen or heard of gold specimens of other medals given to Washington and other Revolutionary and War of 1812 heroes. I have never seen an original impression of the John Paul Jones medal in silver or copper, nor do I remember ever hearing of any. I have asked one or two dealers and collectors and there reply also has been negative. Copper or bronze impressions of the John Paul Jones medal struck dating some time subsequent to the date of the medal are common, as these can be purchased today at the French mint. Also specimens can be purchased at our own mint in Philadelphia. These latter show various differences in the obverse and reverse die when compared with the French mint medal.

All of the specimens of the French mint medal that I have seen bear certain marks on the edge, showing that they were made after a certain date - this date was somewhere between 1816 and 1830. I do not have the record of this at hand. One also can tell the restrikes by certain little let us say rust marks in both obverse and reverse dies that show on the struck medal. Also, certain imperfections around the outer edge of the die, especially on the reverse, show up on all restrikes.

The medal that you submitted to me I carefully examined for these earmarks mentioned above. Although, the medal was somewhat bruised and battered, nevertheless the parts vital for a determination were sufficiently clear so that I could see no imperfections on the medal as show on the restrikes. Also there were no marks on the edge indicating that it was struck at a later time. The medal apparently was copper, a metal used in striking medals absolutely consistent with the time about 1790.

Therefore, I consider the medal that you showed me an original impression. By the word "original" I mean a medal struck at

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the time the die was made or within a reasonable time after the die was made, such as a few months or a year or so. In other words, before the dies had a chance to rust or the edges become bruised through striking. Again, it would be a most natural thing to strike a number of copper medals at the time, and there is no reason to suppose that several copper medals might not have been turned over to our authorities in Paris and sent over to this country and the die held awaiting a specific order for striking silver and gold pieces.

Although I had previously given no thought to the Jones medal until you showed me your specimen I see no reason to challenge your findings and think that you are undoubtedly right in considering the medal you have as one, or the one, originally in Jones' possession, especially as I know of no contemporary medals in gold, silver or bronze. It seems to have been customary to have given to officers and personnel of the ships medals in silver and copper, many of which are engraved with the names of the recipients.

Very sincerely yours,

HW:JG

Curator